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A
LETTER
TO
Sir Thomas Osborn,
One of
His Majesties
PRIVY COUNCIL,

Upon the reading of a BOOK, called,
The present Interest of ENGLAND
Stated.



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 TO
Sir Thomas Osborn,
 One of
His Majesties PRIVY COUNCIL,

Upon the Reading of a Book, called,
The present Interest of ENGLAND stated.

I Have read over the Book you sent me, entitled, *The present Interest of England stated*, and shall deliver you impartially my Opinion of the Author's Judgment. I had done it sooner, could I have believed the giving you so much trouble would admit of an excuse. But if at any time my sending you these Papers can be pardonable, it is now, when we are engaged in a War against the Dutch, since the Argument upon which they are written, is the subject of common discourse. In the first place, I shall take notice, that this Author treats of our Domestic Affairs, not only more rationally, but more like a man concerned for the good of *England*, than he does of our Interests abroad: For then instead of

examining calmly, how far the friendship of other Countries would at this present be useful to us, he falls into passionate expressions of kindness for the *Hollanders*; as if our principal design in seeking *Foreign Alliances*, ought not to be the encrease of our wealth and power, but the finding out humors in another Nation that please us, and the being civil to those with whom we have been longest acquainted. This is a mistake so general amongst us, that I dare not find much fault with it, for fear of being censur'd my self; having observed in most of our discourses upon things of this nature, that though we ought to be in earnest only for our selves, yet out of our extraordinary zeal for some other Country, the debate between us commonly ends in our being ready to go to cuffs one with another.

I fully agree with him, that it is the interest of the King of *England*, to make himself head of the Protestants, and that he should do it, not by being violent for any one Sect, but by taking generally into his Protection all Christians whatsoever, that will not submit to the Government of the Church of *Rome*. I also approve of his stating the true interest of *England* to be Trade, of his observation of some of our customs which are useful to it, of his Proposals of new Laws to be made for the advance of it, and of the necessity of having some enlargement given to people in matters of Religion; for whoever considers the advantage *England* has by its situation, above the rest of the whole world, as to matters of Trade, cannot choose but conclude, that all Traders would desire to live here, if our Laws did not make it uneasie to them.

In a word, I differ from him in none of his Maxims relating to our interest at home, and therefore he ought to take it the less ill of me, if I can not agree with him in all his notions concerning our Alliances abroad. Thus far I am of his opinion, that we ought to keep a good correspondence with *Spain*, that we should hinder the ruin of *Flanders*, and that we are to use our utmost endeavours to preserve the command of the *Baltick* Sea from falling absolutely into the hands, either of the King of *Denmark*, or the King of *Sweden*. I do also believe, the interest of the *Hollanders* and ours, as to that point, is the same; but why therefore we should be so far transported, as not to care what prejudice they do us in other matters, is a piece of Policy I do not very well understand, neither do I see the Consequence why even as to that end, the *Dutch* must needs be so powerful at Sea, as they are now; for if they were less considerable in Shipping, it would not be less their Interest to keep the Dominion of those Seas divided, nor less in their power to effect it, by joyning their Forces with ours. In the beginning of his Book, he rightly states the Interest of *England* to be Trade; but when he comes to his Politicks, he recommends to us in the first place, and as the main point of which we ought to be most careful, that we should be Friends with the *Dutch*, and study their Interest, because they are Traders: never considering, that the same Reason which should make us endeavour the growth of Trade in our own Countrey, must of necessity oblige us to do all we can to obstruct it in another; and that the strength of his Argument

in plain *English*, is no more than this, That because we love Trade, therefore we ought to love those that take it from us. Had the Author been a Lover, instead of a Politician, he would have known, that Rivals are the things in this world, which men commonly do, and ought most to hate. He goes on and tells us, that it would be of dangerous Consequence to *England*, if the *French* King should gain any Towns in *Holland*, because then he would ruine their Trade: How right soever he may be in this Notion, he is mistaken at least in his Reason, for it were certainly better for us, if no People in the world traded by Sea, but our selves.

He says, that if the *Hollanders* and we were joined, we might both together be very considerable. That cannot be denied; but what Reason have we to believe, they ever will join with us to our Advantage? except it be that they never have done so yet, and that it has been their constant Practice to massacre and make Slaves of our Countrey-men in the *East-Indies*, at the same time they amuse us with fair Promises at home. A Humanity to which they owe more, the Greatness of their Possessions in those Parts, than to any other Virtue, for which the Author of this Book can justly commend them.

He says, that their being industrious and parsimonious is not a good Reason why we should dislike them; as if we ought to observe the same Rules between us and other Nations, which we are bound to keep amongst our selves. The trae Aim of every *English* man should be the Good and Prosperity of *England*; for that Reason Industry and

and Parfimony are to be wished for in the Inhabitants of *England*, because they are Qualities advantageous for us, and useful to our Trade: but for the same Reason, they ought not by us to be wished for in the Inhabitants of *Holland*, because those Qualities in them are prejudicial to *England*, and destructive to our Trade. In short, we may love particular men for what Reasons we please, but the measure of our Love to other Nations ought to be only their being useful to ours. I do not from hence infer that because of their Parfimony we ought to do them Injustice, but on the other side, I see no Reason whywe should receive any from them, because they are a niggardly People.

He enters then into a great Admiration of their Morals and Justice, the contrary of which he would certainly have been convinced of, if he had lain but one Night in any Inn of their Countrey. It is true, that almost the whole Nation being Merchants or Tradesmen, every ones Endeavour to under-sell his Neighbour, is the Cause why in the Shops things are sold at a pretty cheap Rate; for this we are but to thank their Necessities, and not their Morals, nor their Justice.

The Author in one place touches a little upon the Necessity of inviting all Princes whatsoever into the Triple League. A Maxim much in vogue with some, who looking very grave, do therefore take it very ill, if for that Reason, you will not allow them to be infallible. To make appear the Profoundness of which Notion, it is necessary that I explain a little what the Triple League is:

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The Triple League was made between the King of England, the King of Swedeland, and the States of Holland, when the French King had entred Flanders with a very powerful Army. The Design of this League was to induce the French to make a Peace with the Spaniard, upon such terms as should be proposed to them by the Confederates of the Triple League; and that they might the easier bring this to pass, they were forced to offer such Conditions as were not altogether for the King of Spain's Advantage, though such as preserved the greatest part of Flanders in his Possession.

At the same time the Confederates made Articles amongst themselves to help one another, in case any of them should be invaded, for having made the Triple League, either by the French King, the King of Spain, or by any of their Allies.

Upon this followed the Treaty at ~~Aix la Chapelle~~, where the French and the Spaniards accepted of the Articles delivered to them by the Confederates of the Triple League, and the Confederates became their Guaranties or Sureties for the Performance of those Articles on both sides. This being the State of the matter, it is very true, we may admit other Princes into the Guaranty of the Peace, but to say, we should invite them into the Triple League, which enforced the Peace, is as much as to say, we should desire their Conjunction in order to the making of a Peace, which had been already concluded several years before; and that, if you mark it, is such a kind of Figure in Discourse as commonly is called a *Bull*.

Besides, we were then forced to agree to several Articles

Articles both with the *Swedes* and the *Dutch*, which it would not be for our advantage now to make with the Emperor or the Princes in *Germany*: it being no Consequence, that because the *Swedes*, the *Dutch*, and we did mutually engage to assist one another, upon our own Charge, at a time when we were afraid the *French* might invade us; that therefore now when we are in no such danger, we should promise to help any other State or Prince, except they will pay us very well for it. They might consider too, if they please, that we are a little nearer *Flanders* than *Hungary*; and that it is not altogether so difficult for us, to transport our men to the other side of the Water, as it would be to make them march into the farthest Parts of *Germany*, as often as it should happen to be invaded by the Great *Turk*; and that the Emperor should claim our Assistance, because the Great *Turk* is one of the King of *France* his Allies. Observe I beseech you, the prettiness of this Politick Gradation, and the Consequence of it, if it were put in Practice: Because we have thought it fit to defend our Neighbours in *Flanders*, we must therefore presently march into the Empire, to defend there some who are not our Neighbours, nor indeed within the Reach of our Protection. Now I would very fain know by this Rule of theirs, when our poor Countrey-men should hope to be at Rest? For the same charitable Reason would lead us on as well to the farthest Parts of *Europe*, nay of the whole World, if these Politicians could but catch us once in a good humour. I must confess, if it be our Ambition to gain the Name of *Peace-makers*

General, without any Consideration, either of our own Interest or Profit in the case, then this were the readiest way to compass that End : but if we will look back into the Examples of former Ages, we shall find, though many Nations have gone a great way for Conquest into Foreign Parts, yet that never any before went so far out of the way to defend their own Country.

There is another Conception of this kind insisted upon by some; as a matter of very great weight, which is, that now we must not fall out with the *Dutch* upon any Provocation, because that would be a Breach of the Triple League. This (under favour) is an Absurdity yet greater than the former, there being no one thing you can allege as a Consequence to any other thing whatsoever, that will not make every whit as sensible a Conclusion as this. For Example, to say, that you ought not to go to Bed to night, because the King of *Spain* did not go yesterday a hunting ; or that I must not dine to morrow, because *Monsieur de wit* loves dancing, is not a more incoherent Discourse, than that because we have promised with the *Dutch* to save *Flanders* from the *French*, therefore what Injuries soever the *Dutch* shall offer us, we cannot defend our selves against them. The Argument, if you mark it, is just thus, that because I agree with *William* to save *Thomas*, therefore I am bound to let *William* cut my Throat. If those good men that start these Notions, I would instead of instructing others, but take the Pains sometimes to think themselves,

themselves, they would find that Self-Preservation ought to be look'd after a little in these kind of Affairs; And that if the Consequence of the Loss of *Flanders* did not somewhat concern us, we should be no more in pain about it, than we were for the Conquest of *Granada*.

I shall now take upon me to state the Interest of *England*, and begin as this Author does, though I differ with him in the Conclusion.

The undoubted Interest of *England* is *Trade*, since it is that only which can make us either *Rich* or *Safe*; for without a *powerful Navy*, we should be a *Prey* to our *Neighbours*, and without *Trad:*, we could neither have *Sea-men* nor *Ships*. From hence it does follow, that we ought not to suffer any other Nations to be our *Equal's* at *Sea*, because when they are once our *Equal's*, it is but an even Lay, whether they or we shall be the *Superiours*. And it would not be a stranger thing that the *Dutch* should come to be so from what they are, now than it is, that they are arrived to what they are now, from what they were in *Queen Elizabeth's* time. I shall add to this one Observation, which in my Opinion is very clear;

That *England* has never been so considerable since her time, as it was then, and yet it is much more so in it self, the Kingdom of *Scotland* being now joyned to the Crown of *England*, which it was not before.—If you enquire into the reason of this, you will find it to be, because we are not now so absolutely the *Masters at Sea*, as we were in those times: for though we have at present

more, and better ships, and a far greater trade than we had then, yet we have of neither so much a larger proportion, in respect to other Nations, as we had at that time. — The Dutch who were then but *a company of Fishermen*, being now both in *Shipping* and *trade* very near our *equals*, and if you will take their words for it, our *Superiors*. And without doubt it is a vain thing for us to pretend to be a ballance between any considerable powers at Land, so long as we are thus equally ballanced at Sea by the Dutch. This it self methinks, should be sufficient to make us not very well pleased with the change of our condition; but our case has yet in it a further consideration, that we are by this means in a perpetual danger of being conquered. For though the Dutch alone cannot do it, yet by joyning with *France* they may, and it is that which a considerable party amongst them has been labouring for these many years. To this it is objected, that it can never be the interest of *Holland* to joyn with *France* in the conquest of *England*; but for ought we know they may mistake their interest; and certainly it is not wisdom in any Nation, to have its *safety* depend upon the *prudence* of another: Besides, it does not appear to me, that it is not the interest of *Holland* to have *England* conquered by them and the French: For first, they may make such a division of *England*, as to keep to themselves the most considerable parts in it for trade, and being Masters of the French at Sea, they will be sure to make their party good with them in an *Island*. In the next place, those

those parts of *England* which should fall to be under the French, would be inconsiderable as to matter of Trade; that, and their *Arbitrary* way of Government, being *incompatible* one with another. And the reason is plain, for there are few that will put out their money upon this double adventure, of losing it at Sea, or having it taken from them when it comes home again. Besides, the nature of the English is so averse to the Government of *France*, and our Religion so different from theirs, that if *England* should happen thus to be conquered, they would be likelier to close with the Dutch, than become subject to the French. All the Trading men would live under the Dutch, and by consequence they would have all the rich Towns, and it is no difficult matter to determine what influence those Towns would have over the rest of the whole Nation. For the very same Reasons, if ever *Holland* should be in danger of a Conquest, by the Conjunction of the French and us, the Dutch would rather choose to become Part of our Government, then submit themselves to the Power of *France*. Against this I have heard some say, that because we endeavour to obstruct their Trade, the Dutch will never joyn with us: But those Gentlemen do not consider, that upon our Conjunction all such Endeavours would cease; for it would then be as much our Interest, to promote their Trade, as the Trade of any other part of *England*. Another Argument which I have met with upon the same Subject is,

is, That the fear of us would force the Dutch to accept of Conditions from the French: But upon a true Examination of the matter, there will be found in the practice of it this Difficulty, that the French will not trust to what the Dutch shall promise, without having such a Power given them in their Country, as may force them to keep their Words; and the Dutch will hardly trust the French with that Power, lest it should be made use of to their Prejudice, whether they keep their words or no. In short, the usual course that all men take, when they are no longer able to defend their own Government, is to choose what is next best for them. So that the natural Question, if that should happen, must necessarily be, Whether, considering our *Laws*, and the *Situation* of our *Country*, the Proffer [of] a *Coalition* with *England*, would not prove more acceptable, and more advantageous to a Trading People, than any Terms they can expect from the *French*. The Sea Towns at least would fall to be our share: And then, though the French should be Masters of the rest of the whole States Dominions, we should have no reason to complain of our part in the Division. Nay, supposing the worst, that we should be so ill advis'd, as to let the French take all, and leave us nothing; yet, even in that Case, the French King would rather make their *Strength* at *Sea* inconsiderable, by their being subject to him, than his own more formidable, by his being their

their Master. For the Power of *Holland* depends upon two things, their *Parsimony*, and their *Liberty*.

By their Liberty, they are encouraged to trade, and by their Parsimony, they are enabled to do it cheaper than any other people. Both which would certainly be destroyed by the profuseness of the French living, and the Severity of their Government.

I do not pretend, that all this is as plain, as that *two* and *two* make *four*, it being impossible to use that certainty of reasoning in things of this nature: but thus far I dare affirm, that no man can be assured, but that some time or other the Dutch may take it to be their Interest to joyn with *France* in the Conquest of *England*; for which Reason, I lay it down as a Maxim, That we must never give them leave to be our *equals* at *Sea*.

In the next place, I think it our interest to preserve *Flanders* from being over-run by the French, lest that might prove of a dangerous consequence to us. But no apprehension of danger, ought to frighten us into a certain ruine; and therefore at the same time we are securing others by the Triple League, we may be allowed at least, to take some care of our own safety; for if, whilst we labour to save the Crown of *Spain*, we suffer the Dutch to rob us of our Trade, we shall make in my judgement, but a very ill bargain for our selves; and the world would have just cause to believe, the Dutch are
our

our Masters already in point of understanding, if they could impose upon us so silly a notion, as that we should employ our strength to support their Government, and let them use their Arts to cut off the Sinews of ours.

I told you at first the reason why I send you now these Papers, and if you find any thing in them with which you cannot agree, I shall be so far from being angry at your differing from my opinion, that you will do me a favour in convincing me to be of yours; being very much persuaded, it is better for a man to be really in the right, than to have it only thought he is so, either by himself or other people.

My aim in this is, that the Interest of England may be thoroughly ~~seen~~ ^{marked} out; and I can truly say for my self, I never yet had any Design, but what I believed was for the Honour, the Greatness, and the Prosperity of this Nation.